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ABSTRACT

Social validity data on different student-teacher ratios were collected from 28 administrators, 31 special education teachers, and 50 parents of students in special education programs. Respondents indicated their opinions about optimal student-teacher ratios for student learning and teacher instruction, with administrators generally expressing preference for 4-6 students per teacher, and teachers and parents expressing preference for 2-3 students per teacher. The largest group size in which they thought special education students could reasonably be taught was most often 4-6 for teachers, and 7-9 for administrators and parents. Overall, teachers and parents indicated that they would prefer for children to receive less frequent instruction in smaller groups in special education, while administrators indicated they would prefer for children to receive more frequent instruction in larger groups in special education. References, five tables, and copies of cover letters and survey forms are included. (Author/JW)

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RESEARCH REPORT NO. 16

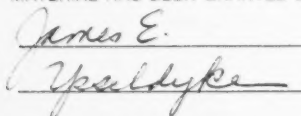
SOCIAL VALIDITY OF DIFFERENT STUDENT-TEACHER RATIOS

James E. Ysseldyke, Martha L. Thurlow,
Ching-Yun Yeh

INSTRUCTIONAL ALTERNATIVES PROJECT

August, 1988

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SOCIAL VALIDITY OF DIFFERENT STUDENT-TEACHER RATIOS

James E. Ysseldyke, Martha L. Thurlow, Ching-Yun Yeh

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Abstract

Social validity data on different student-teacher ratios were collected from 28 administrators, 31 special education teachers, and 50 parents of students in special education programs. Respondents indicated their opinions about optimal student-teacher ratios for student learning and teacher instruction, with administrators generally expressing preference for 4-6 students per teacher, and teachers and parents expressing preference for 2-3 students per teacher. The largest group size in which they thought students in special education could reasonably be taught most often was 4-6 for teachers, and 7-9 for administrators and parents. Overall, teachers and parents indicated that they would prefer for children to receive less frequent instruction in smaller groups in special education, while administrators indicated they would prefer for children to receive more frequent instruction in larger groups in special education.

This project was supported by Grant No. G008630121 from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS). Points of view or opinions do not necessarily represent official position of OSERS.

Social Validity of Different Student-Teacher Ratios

The term "social validity" refers to an often-ignored variable in educational research, the consumer's reaction to a change or intervention. According to Wolf (1978), social validity deals with attitudes or affective outcomes. Social validity clearly needs to be examined when studying the effectiveness of different student-teacher ratios for students with handicaps in special education settings. The issue of student-teacher ratio by itself is an emotionally charged one, especially when the student with handicaps is considered. The typical view is that the student with handicaps requires much individual attention and more of the teacher's time (see ASCD, 1984).

Several factors related to student-teacher ratios were examined over the past year as part of the Student-Teacher Ratio Project at the University of Minnesota. For example, the extent to which states had guidelines for student-teacher ratios, what the guidelines were that did exist, and the extent to which guidelines were consistent with federally reported data on pupil-teacher ratios were examined (Thurlow, Ysseldyke, & Wotruba, in press). In another study, special education teachers were surveyed about the actual number of students they served at one time in their classes (Ysseldyke, Thurlow, & Wotruba, in press). Classroom observations were conducted as part of another investigation to examine the nature of students' responses to instruction and the qualitative nature of instruction for 139 students in ratios of 1:1, 3:1, 6:1, 9:1, and 12:1 (Thurlow, Ysseldyke, & Wotruba, 1988). And, in another investigation, case study analyses were conducted to look at possible interactions among various student characteristics (including category of handicap, gender, grade level, home situation, cognitive ability, social-emotional traits), methods of

instruction, achievement levels, and student-teacher ratios (Ysseldyke, Thurlow, Shriner, & Propsom, 1988).

These studies indicated that there is considerable variability from state to state in guidelines about student-teacher ratios, and in actually occurring student-teacher ratios in special education settings. Most ratios, however, are low, with an average of 5 students or fewer to 1 teacher. Yet, the reported ratios did range up to 15 students per teacher in special education settings. Group comparisons of classroom observation data supported the notion that smaller ratios are more conducive to higher rates of active academic responding, higher rates of academic engaged time, lower rates of task management time, and lower rates of inappropriate responding. Analysis for several individual case studies, however, indicated that much greater complexity was involved. There was not a clear relationship between student-teacher ratio and student responses, nor were there any obvious relationships mediated by various characteristics of the students. Nevertheless, the data were in general support of the notion that lower ratios are preferred in terms of student responses to instruction. The findings did not address other issues, such as student comfort, effects on peer interactions, teacher ease in preparing instruction, and many other issues that must be considered in educating children. It thus remains important to ask about the social validity of various student-teacher ratios.

The purpose of this study was to examine the social validity of different student-teacher ratios. Information was obtained from administrators, special education teachers, and parents of students who were served in special education.

Method

Subjects

Subjects were 109 respondents (28 administrators, 31 special education teachers, and 50 parents) to surveys mailed to 39 administrators (response rate = 72%), 57 teachers (response rate = 54%), and 187 parents (response rate = 27%). For those administrators who provided information about their number of years of experience ($n = 21$), the average was 16.9 years ($SD = 6.4$, Range = 6 - 32 years). Teachers' years of experience averaged 15.3 years ($SD = 7.6$, Range = 1 - 38). The low response rate for parents was due in part to the fact that many of the addresses were more than one year old (thus, not forwardable by the post office if there had been a change in residence). Of the 187 letters initially mailed, 17 were returned by the post office because of no forwarding address; thus, the actual response rate for parents was 29%. No attempts were made to contact possible respondents a second time.

Survey Instruments

Survey instruments were developed to be brief, to promote higher response rates, and to be fairly comparable across groups even though somewhat different questions were asked of parents and school personnel. Administrators and teachers received identical survey forms, with identical items. Parents were first asked to list the group sizes within which their child was taught in special education, and then to rate their satisfaction with each group size (very dissatisfied, dissatisfied, satisfied, very satisfied). All respondents were provided with items that were statements to which they were to indicate the preferred group size (e.g., "In special education, students acquire more skills when instructed in a group size of:"). The topics of included items were on

optimal class sizes in terms of (a) student learning (e.g., student needs met best, student enjoyment, assignment completion, acquisition of skills, active engagement in learning) and (b) teacher instruction (more enjoyable teaching, better quality instruction). In addition, the focus of one item was on the largest reasonable group size for instructing students. A final item set up a preference choice between more frequent instruction in larger groups and less frequent instruction in smaller groups. For all but the last question, group sizes from which respondents could select were 1, 2-3, 4-6, 7-9, and more than 9. The three forms of the survey and the cover letter used for each are included in the Appendix.

Procedure

Survey forms were sent in late spring to all parents and special education teachers of students who had been observed when receiving special education services some time within the past two years. Relevant school district administrators (e.g., Superintendents, Directors of Special Education, Curriculum Directors, Principals) from the eight school districts from which students had been selected were targeted as well as teachers. All surveys were sent with an addressed stamped return envelope.

Results

Chi-square analyses were conducted for each item to compare the frequencies of respondents selecting each group size. Analyses were done separately for the three groups of respondents.

Student Learning

The student learning cluster of items included questions 1-5 on the teacher and administrator surveys, and questions 2-5 on the parent form. Table 1 is a

summary of the percentages of respondents in each group selecting each group size.

Administrators. Chi-square analyses indicated significant differences in the frequency distributions of responses to each of the items related to student learning. Across the items, about two-thirds of the administrators preferred group sizes of either 2-3 (median = 44%) or 4-6 (median = 24%). Still, 34% of the administrators indicated that in special education, students enjoy learning more when taught in a group size of 7-9 or above. None of them selected a group size of 1 as the best choice for this item.

Teachers. Distributions significantly different from expectations were identified at the .05 level for teachers on each of the items in this cluster. For each of the five questions, the 2-3 group size was selected by the largest percentage of teachers (ranging from 43.3% to 72.4%; median = 51.6%). The largest percentage (72.4%) gave the 2-3 group size in response to the items about the group size in which students enjoy learning more. After the 2-3 group size, the size selected most frequently (by approximately one-third or more of the teachers) for all but the "enjoy learning more" items was the group size of 1 (which was selected by only 6.9%). Very few teachers selected the group size of 7-9 as the best choice for the five questions. The percentages selecting this group size ranged from 0% to 3.4% (median = 3.2%). Only one respondent, on one item (students acquire more skills), selected the group size of greater than 9 as the best choice.

Parents. Significant differences from expected distributions of responses were indicated for all items to which parents responded. About two-thirds of the parents preferred group sizes of 1 or 2-3 for every item in the student

learning cluster; 2-3 was preferred by higher percentages of parents on 4 of the 5 items. The exception was that parents thought their children would pay better attention when taught in a group size of 1. Few parents chose the group sizes of 7-9 or more than 9, with the exception of the item on the group size in which children would most enjoy learning, where 20.0% chose the larger group sizes.

Teacher Instruction

Items related to teacher instruction were questions 6 and 7 on the teacher and administrator survey forms, and question 6 on the parent form. Table 2 is a summary of the percentages of respondents in each group selecting each group size.

Administrators. Significant differences in distributions were found at the .05 level for administrators on the two questions in the teacher instruction cluster. Over 80% of the administrators chose either group size 2-3 or 4-6 across the two items. Few administrators chose group sizes at either end of the scale (1 or more than 9). Twelve percent did indicate that quality instruction can be better provided for students in a group size of 1.

Teachers. Differences from expectations in frequencies of responses were found for both items for teachers also. More than 80% of teachers preferred either group size 1 or 2-3 across the two items. Nearly 30% indicated that quality instruction in special education can be better provided for students in a group size of 1. Very few teachers preferred larger group sizes; the percentages choosing group sizes of 7-9 or more than 9 never exceeded 7%.

Parents. For the one item in this cluster on the parent form, the distribution was significantly different from that expected by chance. The 2-3 group size received the highest frequency count among the five group size

choices. Again, the distribution was skewed to the right. Very few parents preferred larger group sizes (less than 7% selecting 7-9 or more than 9).

Largest Group Size

This cluster included question 8 on the administrator and teacher forms, and question 7 on the parent form. For each respondent group, the obtained frequency distributions were significantly different from expectation. The group size that received the highest frequency of responses in all groups was 4-6, selected by 40.0% of administrators, 56.7% of teachers, and 48.8% of parents (see Table 3). The group size with the second highest frequency count was 2-3 for teachers (26.7%), and 7-9 for both administrators (32.0%) and parents (30.2%). Still, 12.0% of administrators and 11.6% of parents chose a group size of more than 9 as the largest group size reasonable for instructing students.

Trade-off Issue

Question 9 on the administrator and teacher forms and question 8 on the parent form asked that a choice be made between students receiving in special education either (a) more frequent instruction in large group sizes, or (b) less frequent instruction in small group sizes. Differences from expected frequencies were found only for parents on this item.

Preference for less frequent instruction in smaller group sizes was indicated by 67.5% of parents and by 63.3% of teachers (see Table 4). In contrast, preference for more frequent instruction in large group sizes was indicated by 63.6% of administrators.

Parental Satisfaction with Current Group Sizes

Table 5 is a summary of the percentages of parents indicating each group size as one in which their child received special education services. Most parents indicated group sizes of 2-3 (43.1%) and 4-6 (25.9%). Overall, regardless of group size, parents were satisfied (46.6%) or very satisfied (43.1%) with their child's current group size. Only 6.9% were dissatisfied and only 3.4% were very dissatisfied with the size. More specifically, 88.0% of parents rated satisfied or very satisfied with the 2-3 group size, 100.0% gave these ratings to the 4-6 group size. For larger group sizes, 100.0% of parents were satisfied or very satisfied with the 7-9 group size; 88.0% were satisfied or very satisfied with the more than 9 group size. Only 13.0% were very dissatisfied with the more than 9 group size.

Comments

On all forms, space was available for respondents to make comments. Many did so. Of the 28 responding administrators, 10 (35.7%) wrote comments. Of the 31 responding special education teachers, 11 (35.5%) wrote comments. And, of the 50 responding parents, 24 (48.0%) wrote comments.

Of the 10 administrators who wrote comments, none of them indicated a preference for larger or smaller group sizes; 8 (80%) commented specifically that there was no single best answer. They indicated that the choice of group size depended on several important factors such as student age, need, type of handicap, severity of the problem, what was being taught, total number of students needing to be served, model of service, and level of service. One administrator reported that the school mainstreamed all LD teachers for groups that contained LD and non-LD students, and that this resulted in higher self

images for all students. It was also suggested that a recommended combination might be instruction within the total mainstream class as well as cooperative learning within small groups. However, one administrator indicated that if all students belonged in the mainstream, then support should be given to classroom teachers, too.

Of the 11 teachers who wrote comments, 5 (45.5%) pointed out that special education is a broad term, and that group size selection should be based on individual need, type of handicap, and age of student rather than the group size itself. Smaller groups were preferred by 4 (36.4%) of the teachers. The main reason was that the larger the group size, the less effective the instruction. Nevertheless, 2 (18.2%) of the teachers indicated that good things can happen in larger groups if the group is homogeneous. Group learning with peer tutoring might also be effective among larger groups.

Written comments on the group size issue were made by 24 parents; 4 (16.7%) thought group size choice depended on what skill was to be taught. For social skills, larger groups are better, while in academic areas, smaller groups are better. Smaller groups were preferred by 11 parents (45.8%) because they resulted in less distraction as well as improved confidence and self esteem.

Parents also indicated that students got more opportunity for learning, more special attention, and more frequent academic responding and feedback. For these parents, larger groups were considered to be a waste of time and to provide insufficient service for the child with special needs. Three (12.5%) parents preferred larger group sizes because they believed their child felt less stress and worked well in larger groups. The other 6 parents (25.0%) gave other comments about the issue. Generally speaking, consistency and child self esteem

are important factors to be considered; one viable choice is to have the child in the mainstream with peer tutoring and with the special education teacher coming in.

Discussion

Opinions about student-teacher ratios in special education differ as a function of the role that one plays in the education of the student with mild handicaps, be it parent, teacher, or administrator. Yet, the differences are not extremely large. Administrators, teachers, and parents alike appear to prefer smaller student-teacher ratios for students in special education. Administrators, who are most likely to recognize constraints of budget, space, and numbers to be served, simply adopt a slightly larger number of students in a group as constituting a low student-teacher ratio. They also are more likely to believe that it is better for students to have more frequent instruction in larger group sizes, whereas teachers and parents are more likely to believe that it is better for students to have less frequent instruction in smaller group sizes.

The recent observational study of rates of active academic responding and academic engaged time (Thurlow et al., 1988) for students in different student-teacher ratio categories (1:1, 3:1, 6:1, 9:1, 12:1) produced findings indicating that greater rates of student academic responding occurred in smaller student-teacher ratios, with 1:1 favored over 3:1 in several instances, and 3:1 favored in many cases over 6:1 and higher ratios. Thus, the preference for a 4-6:1 ratio over a 2-3:1 ratio in actuality means a significant reduction in students' active responding time, on the average.

While administrators tend to select larger group sizes across the board, teachers tend to select smaller group sizes. It is interesting to note that teachers appear almost universally to believe that "small" is best, regardless of the focus of the group. Specifically, for all aspects of student learning, the majority of teachers selected a group size of 2-3 students as optimal. Administrators and parents were more likely to differentiate among purposes. For example, both administrators and parents indicated that for student enjoyment of learning, larger group sizes would be optimal. When the focus was on factors related to teacher instruction, very few respondents, regardless of group, selected as optimal any size larger than 4-6 students per teacher. Clearly favored were group sizes of 1 or 2-3, the same sizes that teachers themselves thought were best for student learning as well as teacher instruction.

When asked about the largest reasonable group size in which students could be instructed when receiving special education services, all groups had most respondents identifying the 4-6 group size as optimal. The next most frequent responses, however, again differed for teachers compared to the other two groups. The next most frequent response for teachers was the 2-3 group size, while for both administrators and parents it was 7-9.

Regardless of beliefs that parents hold about optimal group sizes, it appears that they believe that the current student-teacher ratio in which their child is taught is satisfactory. This was almost universally true regardless of whether the parent's child was taught in a group of 4-6 students per teacher or in a group of 10-19 students per teacher. This kind of finding leads one to question the extent to which parents are differentiating the nature of

instruction their child receives in special education from the simple fact that the child is getting some "special help." It appears that parent education and involvement in the special education process remain a need.

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Table 1

Distribution of Group Size Selections to Student Learning Items

Item	<u>Group Size</u>				
	1	2-3	4-6	7-9	>9
<u>Individual Needs Best Met^a</u>					
Administrators	15.4	46.2	23.1	7.7	7.7
Teachers	38.7	48.4	9.7	3.2	0.0
<u>Student Enjoys Learning More</u>					
Administrators	0.0	34.6	30.8	23.1	11.5
Teachers	6.9	72.4	17.2	3.5	0.0
Parents	17.8	35.6	26.7	8.9	11.1
<u>Student Completes More Assignments</u>					
Administrators	20.0	44.0	20.0	12.0	4.0
Teachers	43.3	43.3	10.0	3.3	0.0
Parents	35.6	40.0	15.6	8.9	0.0
<u>Student Acquires More Skills</u>					
Administrators	8.3	45.8	33.3	4.2	8.3
Teachers	32.3	51.6	9.7	3.2	3.2
Parents	29.6	36.4	25.0	6.8	2.3
<u>Student More Actively Engaged^b</u>					
Administrators	20.0	44.0	24.0	4.0	8.3
Teachers	32.3	51.6	16.1	0.0	0.0
Parents	42.6	34.0	17.0	6.4	0.0

Note: Entries in table are percentages.

^aThe parent form did not have this item.

^bThe parent form used "pays better attention" rather than "actively engaged."

Table 2

Distribution of Group Size Selections to Teacher Instruction Items

Item	<u>Group Size</u>				
	1	2-3	4-6	7-9	>9
<u>Teaching More Enjoyable^a</u>					
Administrators	4.2	45.8	37.5	8.3	4.2
Teachers	10.0	73.3	10.0	3.3	3.3
<u>Better Quality Instruction^b</u>					
Administrators	12.0	44.0	36.0	4.0	4.0
Teachers	26.7	60.0	10.0	0.0	3.3
Parents	22.2	44.4	26.7	4.4	2.2

Note: Entries in table are percentages.

^aThe parent form did not have this item.

^bThe parent form used an alternate form of this item (i.e., "teachers do a better job").

Table 3

Distribution of Group Size Selections to Largest Group Size Item

Respondents	<u>Group Size</u>				
	1	2-3	4-6	7-9	>9
Administrators	0.0	12.0	44.0	32.0	12.0
Teachers	0.0	26.7	56.7	13.3	3.3
Parents	0.0	9.3	48.8	30.2	11.6

Note: Entries in table are percentages.

Table 4

Distribution of Choice Selections on Tradeoff Item

Respondents	<u>Choice</u>	
	More Frequent Large Group	Less Frequent Small Group
Administrators	63.6	36.4
Teachers	36.7	63.3
Parents	32.5	67.5

Note: Entries in table are percentages.

Table 5

Distribution of Group Sizes and Parent Satisfaction

Group Size	Total	<u>Satisfaction</u>			
		Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
1	7	0.0	28.6	14.3	57.1
2-3	25	4.0	8.0	40.0	48.0
4-6	15	0.0	0.0	53.3	46.7
7-9	3	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0
10-19	3	0.0	0.0	66.7	33.3
20 or more	5	20.0	0.0	60.0	0.0

Note: Entries in table are percentages.

Appendix

Cover Letters and Survey Forms

June 7, 1988

Over the past two years, we have worked cooperatively with your school district to collect information on a variety of classroom variables that influence student achievement. We are now at the point where we are summarizing data collected through observations and interviews. Before we compile all results, however, we believe that it is important to get your opinion and the opinions of others about the impact of one particular factor in special education settings. The factor in which we are interested is the group size within which students are taught. Please take a few minutes now to complete the enclosed Group Size Survey and then return it in the enclosed stamped envelope.

This survey is being sent to administrators in many school districts, and results will be summarized for all responding. Summary results will be made available along with complete study results. Individuals will not be identified. Completion and return of this survey will contribute to our knowledge about classroom situations that help children learn. If you have any questions about the survey, please call Martha Thurlow at the University of Minnesota (624-4826).

Sincerely,

GROUP SIZE SURVEY

Please respond to each question based upon group size (number of students) in special education settings. Select only one choice for each question.

1. In special education, the individual needs of students can best be met in a group size of:
☐ 1-1 ☐ 2-3 ☐ 4-6 ☐ 7-9 ☐ 9 or more
2. In special education, students enjoy learning more when taught in a group size of:
☐ 1-1 ☐ 2-3 ☐ 4-6 ☐ 7-9 ☐ 9 or more
3. In special education, students complete more assignments when instructed in a group size of:
☐ 1-1 ☐ 2-3 ☐ 4-6 ☐ 7-9 ☐ 9 or more
4. In special education, students acquire more skills when instructed in a group size of:
☐ 1-1 ☐ 2-3 ☐ 4-6 ☐ 7-9 ☐ 9 or more
5. In special education, students are more actively engaged in learning when taught in a group size of:
☐ 1-1 ☐ 2-3 ☐ 4-6 ☐ 7-9 ☐ 9 or more
6. In special education, teaching is more enjoyable in a group size of:
☐ 1-1 ☐ 2-3 ☐ 4-6 ☐ 7-9 ☐ 9 or more
7. In special education, quality instruction can be better provided for students in a group size of:
☐ 1-1 ☐ 2-3 ☐ 4-6 ☐ 7-9 ☐ 9 or more
8. In special education, what would be the largest group size that would be reasonable for instructing students?
☐ 1-1 ☐ 2-3 ☐ 4-6 ☐ 7-9 ☐ 9 or more

9. In special education, which do you feel is a better tradeoff?

_____ Students receive more frequent instruction in large group sizes.

_____ Students receive less frequent instruction in small group sizes.

Comments:

FORM COMPLETED BY:

_____ teacher

_____ administrator

_____ number years experience

_____ number years experience



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TWIN CITIES

College of Education

Instructional Alternatives Project
Department of Educational Psychology
350 Elliott Hall
75 East River Road
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455
(612) 624-8561

May 31, 1988

Dear Teacher:

Over the past two years, we have worked cooperatively with your school district to collect information on a variety of classroom variables that influence student achievement. We are now at the point where we are summarizing data collected through observations and interviews. Before we compile all results, however, we believe that it is important to get your opinion and the opinions of other teachers, as well as the opinions of parents, about the impact of one particular factor in special education settings. The factor in which we are interested is the group size within which students are taught. Please take a few minutes now to complete the enclosed Group Size Survey and then return it in the enclosed stamped envelope.

This survey is being sent to teachers in many school districts, and results will be summarized for all responding. Summary results will be made available to the school district and to you. Individuals will not be identified. Completion and return of this survey will contribute to our knowledge about classroom situations that help children learn. If you have any questions about the survey, please call Martha Thurlow at the University of Minnesota (624-4826).

MT/sh

GROUP SIZE SURVEY

Please respond to each question based upon group size (number of students) in special education settings. Select only one choice for each question.

1. In special education, the individual needs of students can best be met in a group size of:
☐ 1-1 ☐ 2-3 ☐ 4-6 ☐ 7-9 ☐ 9 or more
2. In special education, students enjoy learning more when taught in a group size of:
☐ 1-1 ☐ 2-3 ☐ 4-6 ☐ 7-9 ☐ 9 or more
3. In special education, students complete more assignments when instructed in a group size of:
☐ 1-1 ☐ 2-3 ☐ 4-6 ☐ 7-9 ☐ 9 or more
4. In special education, students acquire more skills when instructed in a group size of:
☐ 1-1 ☐ 2-3 ☐ 4-6 ☐ 7-9 ☐ 9 or more
5. In special education, students are more actively engaged in learning when taught in a group size of:
☐ 1-1 ☐ 2-3 ☐ 4-6 ☐ 7-9 ☐ 9 or more
6. In special education, teaching is more enjoyable in a group size of:
☐ 1-1 ☐ 2-3 ☐ 4-6 ☐ 7-9 ☐ 9 or more
7. In special education, quality instruction can be better provided for students in a group size of:
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8. In special education, what would be the largest group size that would be reasonable for instructing students?
☐ 1-1 ☐ 2-3 ☐ 4-6 ☐ 7-9 ☐ 9 or more

9. In special education, which do you feel is a better tradeoff?

_____ Students receive more frequent instruction in large group sizes.

_____ Students receive less frequent instruction in small group sizes.

Comments:

FORM COMPLETED BY:

_____ teacher

_____ administrator

_____ number years experience

_____ number years experience

May 31, 1988

Dear Parent:

Over the past two years, we have worked cooperatively with your school district to collect information on a variety of classroom variables that influence student achievement. We are now at the point where we are summarizing data collected through observations and interviews. Before we compile all results, however, we believe that it is important to get your opinion and the opinions of other parents, as well as the opinions of teachers, about the impact of one particular factor in special education settings. The factor in which we are interested is the group size within which students are taught. If your child is in special education, please take a few minutes now to complete the enclosed Group Size Survey and then return it in the enclosed stamped envelope.

This survey is being sent to parents in many school districts, and results will be summarized for all responding. Summary results will be made available to the school district and to you. Individuals will not be identified. Completion and return of this survey will contribute to our knowledge about classroom situations that help children learn. If you have any questions about the survey, please call Martha Thurlow at the University of Minnesota (624-4826).

MT/sh

GROUP SIZE SURVEY

Please answer each question based upon your child's special education classes.

1. In special education, list the group sizes (number of students) in which your child is taught under the "Group Size" heading. Please rate how satisfied you are with each group size. Please write "Don't know" if you do not know the group size.

Group Size	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
_____	1	2	3	4
_____	1	2	3	4
_____	1	2	3	4
_____	1	2	3	4

For questions 2 - 8, please select only one choice.

2. In special education, I think my child would most enjoy learning in a group size of:

_____ 1-1 _____ 2-3 _____ 4-6 _____ 7-9 _____ 9 or more

3. In special education, I think my child would complete more work when taught in a group size of:

_____ 1-1 _____ 2-3 _____ 4-6 _____ 7-9 _____ 9 or more

4. In special education, I think my child would learn more (acquire more skills) when taught in a group of:

_____ 1-1 _____ 2-3 _____ 4-6 _____ 7-9 _____ 9 or more

5. In special education, I think my child would pay better attention when taught in a group size of:

_____ 1-1 _____ 2-3 _____ 4-6 _____ 7-9 _____ 9 or more

6. In special education, I think teachers do a better job when they instruct children in a group size of:

_____ 1-1 _____ 2-3 _____ 4-6 _____ 7-9 _____ 9 or more

(OVER)

7. In special education, what would be the largest group in which you would be willing to have your child taught?

_____ 1-1 _____ 2-3 _____ 4-6 _____ 7-9 _____ 9 or more

8. In special education, which do you feel is a better tradeoff:

_____ Your child receives more frequent instruction in large group sizes.

_____ Your child receives less frequent instruction in small group sizes.

Comments:

IAP PUBLICATIONS

Instructional Alternatives Project
350 Elliott Hall
University of Minnesota
75 East River Road
Minneapolis, MN 55455

Research Reports

- No. 1 Time allocated to instruction of mentally retarded, learning disabled, emotionally disturbed, and nonhandicapped elementary students by J. E. Ysseldyke, M. L. Thurlow, S. L. Christenson, & J. Weiss (March, 1987).
- No. 2 Instructional tasks used by mentally retarded, learning disabled, emotionally disturbed, and nonhandicapped elementary students by J. E. Ysseldyke, S. L. Christenson, M. L. Thurlow, & D. Bakewell (June, 1987).
- No. 3 Instructional grouping arrangements used with mentally retarded, learning disabled, emotionally disturbed, and nonhandicapped elementary students by J. E. Ysseldyke, M. L. Thurlow, S. L. Christenson, & R. McVicar (July, 1987).
- No. 4 Academic engagement and active responding of mentally retarded, learning disabled, emotionally disturbed and nonhandicapped elementary students by J. E. Ysseldyke, S. L. Christenson, M. L. Thurlow, & R. Skiba (July, 1987).
- No. 5 The qualitative nature of instruction for mentally retarded, learning disabled, and emotionally disturbed elementary students in special education by J. E. Ysseldyke, S. L. Christenson, & M. L. Thurlow (July, 1987).
- No. 6 State guidelines for student-teacher ratios for mildly handicapped children by M. L. Thurlow, J. E. Ysseldyke, & J. W. Wotruba (July, 1987).
- No. 7 Student-teacher ratios for mildly handicapped children in special education settings by J. E. Ysseldyke, M. L. Thurlow, & J. W. Wotruba (November, 1987).
- No. 8 Regular education teachers' perceptions of instructional arrangements for students with mild handicaps by J. E. Ysseldyke, M. L. Thurlow, J. W. Wotruba, & P. A. Nania (January, 1988).
- No. 9 Differences in the qualitative nature of instruction for LD and EBD students in regular and special education settings by J. E. Ysseldyke, S. L. Christenson, & M. L. Thurlow (January, 1988).
- No. 10 Alternate explanations for learning disabled, emotionally disturbed, and educable mentally retarded students' reading achievement by J. E. Ysseldyke, D. Bakewell, S. L. Christenson, P. Muyskens, J. G. Shriner, M. Cleary, & J. Weiss (July, 1988).
- No. 11 Alternate explanations for learning disabled, emotionally disturbed, and educable mentally retarded students' math achievement by J. E. Ysseldyke, M. Cleary, S. L. Christenson, P. Muyskens, J. G. Shriner, D. Bakewell, & J. Weiss (August, 1988).

IAP PUBLICATIONS

Page Two

- No. 12 Student and instructional outcomes under varying student-teacher ratios in special education by M. L. Thurlow, J. E. Ysseldyke, & J. W. Wotruba (August, 1988).
- No. 13 Teacher stress and student achievement for mildly handicapped students by D. Bakewell, S. R. McConnell, J. E. Ysseldyke, & S. L. Christenson (August, 1988).
- No. 14 A case study analysis of factors related to effective student-teacher ratios by J. E. Ysseldyke, M. L. Thurlow, J. G. Shriner, & C. S. Prompsom (August, 1988).
- No. 15 Written language: The instructional experience of mildly handicapped and nonhandicapped elementary students by R. McVicar, S. L. Christenson, M. L. Thurlow, & J. E. Ysseldyke (August, 1988).
- No. 16 Social validity of different student-teacher ratios by M. L. Thurlow, J. E. Ysseldyke, & C. Yeh (August 1988).
- No. 17 Home environments of mildly handicapped and nonhandicapped elementary students by S. L. Christenson, J. E. Ysseldyke, & M. Cleary (September, 1988).

Monographs

- No. 1 Instructional environment scale: Scale development and training procedures by J. E. Ysseldyke, S. L. Christenson, R. McVicar, D. Bakewell, & M. L. Thurlow (December, 1986).
- No. 2 Instructional psychology and models of school learning: Implications for effective instruction of handicapped students by S. L. Christenson, J. E. Ysseldyke, & M. L. Thurlow (May, 1987).
- No. 3 School effectiveness: Implications for effective instruction of handicapped students by M. L. Thurlow, S. L. Christenson, & J. E. Ysseldyke (May, 1987).
- No. 4 Instructional effectiveness: Implications for effective instruction of handicapped students by S. L. Christenson, M. L. Thurlow, & J. E. Ysseldyke (May, 1987).
- No. 5 Teacher effectiveness and teacher decision making: Implications for effective instruction of handicapped students by J. E. Ysseldyke, M. L. Thurlow, & S. L. Christenson (May, 1987).
- No. 6 Student cognitions: Implications for effective instruction of handicapped students by M. L. Thurlow, J. E. Ysseldyke, & S. L. Christenson (May, 1987).
- No. 7 Instructional factors that influence student achievement: An integrative review by J. E. Ysseldyke, S. L. Christenson, & M. L. Thurlow (September, 1987).
- No. 8 Adults in the classroom: Effects on special education instruction by A. E. Dear, M. L. Thurlow, & J. E. Ysseldyke (September, 1987).